

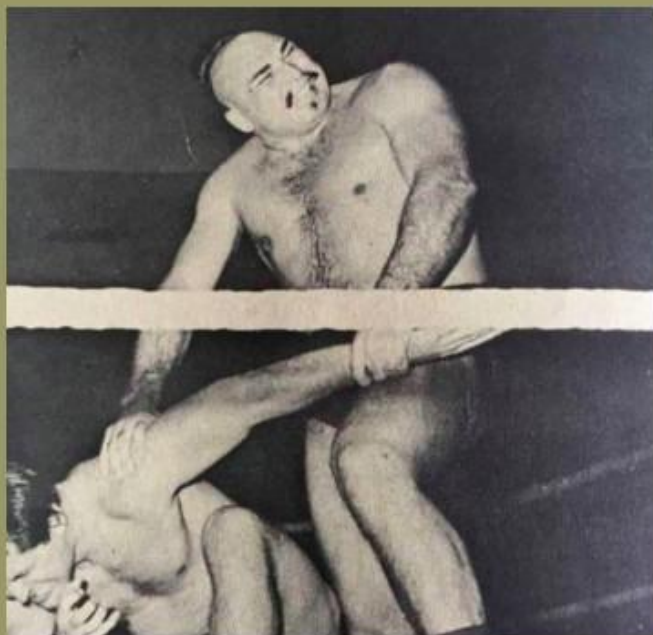
My Wrestling Journey



The travels of Our Man from Down Under

John Shelvey

Part 5: 1965 to 1970, Let Mayhem Commence at The Old Tin Shed!



The Mongolian Stomper at work. Or play?

1965 went out with a whimper, the circus had left town and Christmas was the worst one I had ever had and still is to this day. What's so bad with a Christmas Day barbecue, or picnic on the beach I hear you ask? Absolutely nothing, I can only presume, as I've never had one! Growing up, Christmas was marvellous and the same, every year. Travel to Nan's in Perivale in Middlesex, meet up with all the aunts, uncles, cousins and close friends of the family, most of whom would stay for both Christmas and Boxing Day and the house would be full of warmth and joy and fun, at least that was how I fondly remembered those halcyon days. Flash forward then to our first Christmas in Australia, our family of four ensconced in a brand new house, in a new cul-de-sac with only a few other houses that were occupied. I have no recollection of the day, no recall of what presents I'm sure I received, no idea if we had a traditional Christmas dinner or perhaps we had a salad, it was Summer after all! The only two things I can recall, is that we watched Wagon Train and then went to bed at half past ten. Half past ten on Christmas Day evening. So, that was, pathetic!



Ray Stevens, a larger than life character, a great worker, and especially a great bump taker.

The Mongolian Stomper. What a great wrestling name! Do you recall how surprised, or perhaps disappointed you felt, when you discovered that Cary Grant was Archibald Leach? I have no intentions to give you the weights or measures and the real names of the wrestlers I refer to here, simply because of the Mongolian Stomper, who was among the first wave of the Yanks to arrive here in January 1965. He was a big, rough, tough heavyweight who, as his name implied, would stomp all over his opponents in the tradition of his ancestor, the mighty Kubla Khan. He looked Asian, with almond shaped eyes and that curious hairstyle peculiar to the Mongolians. His real

name was Archie Goldie. Disappointed? That's why I won't be giving away any more 'real' names!

Along with the Stomper (Archie), Cowboy Bob Ellis and Ray Stevens, two superstars of the American mat scene were here and both were particular favourites of mine, even though I had never seen them wrestle, but had read a lot about them in the wrestling magazines. The Cowboy was a good guy, Stevens the 'Blonde Bomber' a baddie and they both lived up to their publicity! Dominic DeNucci was back and Killer Kowalski returned as Champion, but again I won't be keeping a running score of the numerous changing of the 'World Title' as my intent is to convey my memories. Here are some of the more memorable moments I remember from that time, at the Sydney Stadium, known affectionately as the Old Tin Shed or the Old Barn, (with the odd tv highlight).

The stadium was squat, sprawling around a corner, with box office windows out front. Inside, bleachers at the very top with a wire fence, effectively caging in, those who could only afford the cheap seats. If you valued your life, you would never venture behind the wire, you might never be heard of or seen again. Otherwise it was row after row of benches right up close to the ring. Over the ring, hanging from a chain, was a large box which housed one large light bulb that lit up the ring, which looked nothing special, although sometimes something special or extraordinary, even magical, would take place. Underneath the descending rows of benches, there was a cavernous space which very often swallowed up handbags, holdalls, or any other object that was placed on the floor and then inadvertently kicked into the abyss by the owner, or another patron passing by. The only recourse then, was to seek out a stadium worker who would cheerlessly accompany you, waving his torch here and there, into the darkness, searching for the missing item(s). I recovered a bag from the gloom once and it wasn't an experience I'd wish to repeat! The latrines were a nightmare! I'm sure many a good shoe was ruined by the yellow stream that ebbed and flowed on the floor. On most occasions you would splash your way through puddles of number one, from blocked and overflowing drains. I had to

laugh when one night, standing at the trough (trying not to breath in the noxious odours) I heard one guy remark to another 'Shocking ain't it?' to which the other replied 'Yeah, but if it's good enough for Sinatra, it's good enough for me!' (I've always presumed that the Stadiums' dressing rooms loos were of a slightly higher standard than that of the general punters pissoir)!

By the end of February, the travelling show had ten big name practitioners plying their trade. In fact on one of those cards, they had five singles matches without the need of any local wrestlers. One of the new faces, apart from being arguably the most popular wrestlers to appear for the promotion, would go on to be a perennial visitor and important cog in the company's successful tenure Down Under, as innovative booker as well as a Superstar.



Alan Pinfold a twenty year veteran at the time the Yanks arrived, Alan was seemingly forever on tv, putting over the visitors. He was a good hand who had held the Australian light heavyweight title. Alan wrestled overseas and hung up his boots in 1973.